



Kids CAN PLAY!

Encouraging children to be active at home, at school, and in their communities

Activity levels of children and youth in Nova Scotia

Average Steps The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth (CANPLAY) study measures physical activity levels of children and youth by using pedometers to measure daily steps. Most of the analyses in this bulletin are based on combined data collected in year three and four (2007-2009) of data collection (unless otherwise stated).

During this time period, children and youth (between the ages of 5 and 19) in Nova Scotia took an average of 11,200 steps; this is slightly lower than the national average. There has been no significant change in the number of steps taken by children living in Nova Scotia since 2005-07.

Compared to other regions across Canada, children and youth in Nova Scotia take fewer steps than those in Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and Yukon, but a similar number of steps to those in other provinces or territories.

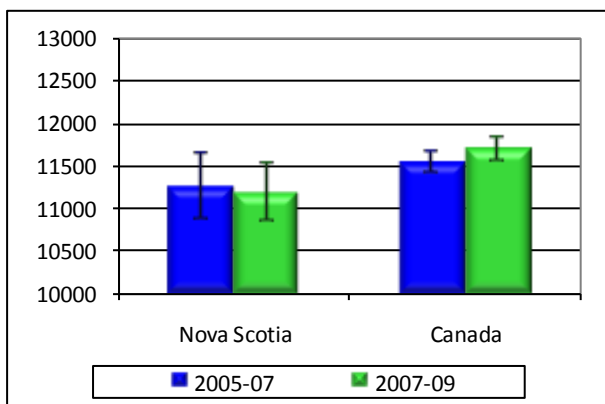
Child characteristics

Similar to national findings, children and youth living in Nova Scotia take more steps if they are:

- younger children (age 5 to 14) compared to older youth (age 15 to 19);
- boys compared to girls; and
- participants in organized physical activity and sport compared to those who are not.

FIGURE 1

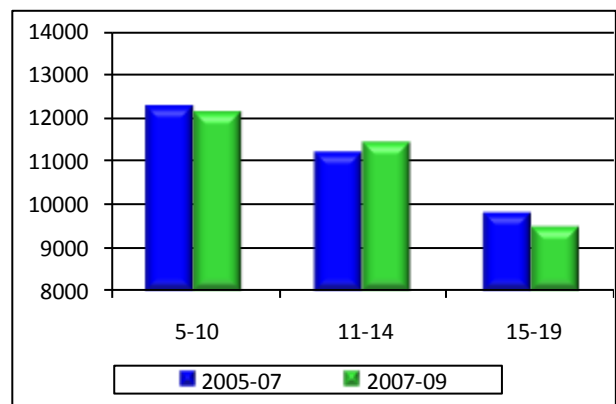
Average steps, overall, Nova Scotia and Canada



CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI

FIGURE 2

Average steps, by child age, Nova Scotia



CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI



Parent and household characteristics

At the national level, certain parental or household characteristics are associated with higher steps in children:

- University education of parents compared to those with a secondary level of education
- Highest income households (\$100,000 or greater) compared to those in low to middle income households.
- More active parents compared to those who are less active (slightly) than their peers.

These relationships, however, are not significant among children and youth living in Nova Scotia.

How many steps are sufficient for children and youth to be healthy?

How many steps are required to be healthy? No definitive guidelines have been established regarding the number of steps required for health benefits for children and youth. However, several criteria have been suggested, and they are described below.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide (CPAG) for children and youth sets a goal that children add 90 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity to the incidental activities required by daily living, which translates roughly into 16,500 steps daily.^{1,2} When using this criterion, 91% of children and youth in 2007-09 living in Nova Scotia do not accumulate enough daily steps associated with the guidelines. This proportion does not differ significantly from the national average. Within Nova Scotia, the proportion not meeting this criterion has not changed significantly since 2005-07.

15,000 step criterion for children and youth is based on research that suggests 120 to 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity (here considered an equivalent of 15,000 steps) for both boys and girls is required for health.^{2,3} Using this criterion, 83% of children and youth in 2007-09 living in Nova Scotia do not accumulate enough daily steps associated with the

15,000 criterion. This proportion does not differ significantly from the national average and, similarly, has not significantly changed within the province since 2005-07.

BMI-referenced criteria for children and youth, 12,000 steps daily for girls and 15,000 steps daily for boys, is based on research that suggests that these step counts are associated with a healthy body mass index (BMI) among 6 to 12 year-olds.⁴ Using these criteria, 72% of children and youth in Nova Scotia do not accumulate enough daily steps. This proportion does not differ significantly from the national average. As with the other two criteria, the proportion in Nova Scotia not meeting these criteria is similar to the rate in 2005-07.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of children and youth living in Nova Scotia that are more likely not to meet each of the three criteria.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of children and youth who do not meet step criteria, Nova Scotia

	CPAG criterion	15,000 step criterion	BMI-referenced criteria
Overall proportion	91%	83%	72%
Change from 2005-07	No change	No change	No change
Provincial comparisons	More children in NS do not meet criteria compared to those in ON and BC	More children in NS do not meet criteria compared to those in BC and YT	More children in NS do not meet criteria compared to those in BC and YT
Child characteristics	Older youth more than younger youth (11 to 14 years)	Girls more than boys Older youth more than younger children	Boys more than girls Older youth more than younger children
Parental and household characteristics	Unlike nationally, no relationships		

CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI

References

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3. Epstein, L.H., Paluch, R.A., Kalakanis, L.E., Goldfield, G.S., Cerny, F.J. & Roemmich, J.N. (2001). How much physical activity do youth get? A quantitative review of heart-rate measured activity. *Pediatrics*, 108, e44.
4. Tudor-Locke, C., Pangrazi, R.P., Corbin, C.B., Rutherford, W.J., Vincent, S.D., Raustorp, A., Tomson, L.M. & Cuddihy, T.F. (2004). BMI-referenced standards for recommended pedometer-determined steps/day in children. *Preventive Medicine*, 38, 857-864.

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